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O 101346Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7973
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHSK/AMEMBASSY MINSK PRIORITY 0074
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO PRIORITY 0049
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2368
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 8627
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2526
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 6325
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0741

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MISSION GENEVA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNHRC](#) [BO](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY PREOCCUPIED WITH OWN UN HRC CANDIDACY, HOPES
FOR EU POSITION

REF: A. STATE 58036

[B](#). YOUNG/COHEN EMAIL MAY 9
[C](#). STATE 63345

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Jonathan R. Cohen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Poloff delivered Ref A points to UN Office Director Leonardo Bencini May 9, urging Italy not to support Belarus' candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council, but rather to support Slovenia and a third candidate. Bencini responded May 10 that Italy was absorbed in its own candidacy for the Council, where it was in a tight contest with the Netherlands and Denmark, and had not had time to focus on the Eastern European Group race. Italy supported Germany's letter asking EU countries to only support UN HRC candidates with strong human rights records. Bencini said no EU country would support Belarus' candidacy, nor would Italy.

[2](#). (C) However, Bencini noted that this was a moot point in Italy's view: Belarus would never get the required votes to be elected. Poloff pointed out that we viewed a Belarusian seat on the HRC as a very real possibility, as did many countries in the EU, and urged Italy to focus on the Eastern European race. When Poloff inquired which country other than Slovenia Italy would support, Bencini responded that the GOI had not yet thought over the matter. He promised to spend some time studying the issue in the next few days. Bencini said Italy would welcome the EU making an exception to its practice of not coordinating votes in multilateral contests to come to a common position on not supporting Belarus.

[3](#). (C) Comment. If Italy is indeed contemplating a vote exchange with Belarus (Ref B), the deal is more likely being done in New York. The MFA appears to be fully preoccupied with Italy's own candidacy and has not been keeping up with the Eastern European Group vote dynamics (Bencini was not aware of Bosnia's potential candidacy). Given the GOI's lack of concern about a potential Belarus win, Post concurs with the suggestion of additional Department-based outreach. We will continue to monitor Italy's position per Ref C and have requested additional high level meetings to raise this issue.
End comment.
Spogli